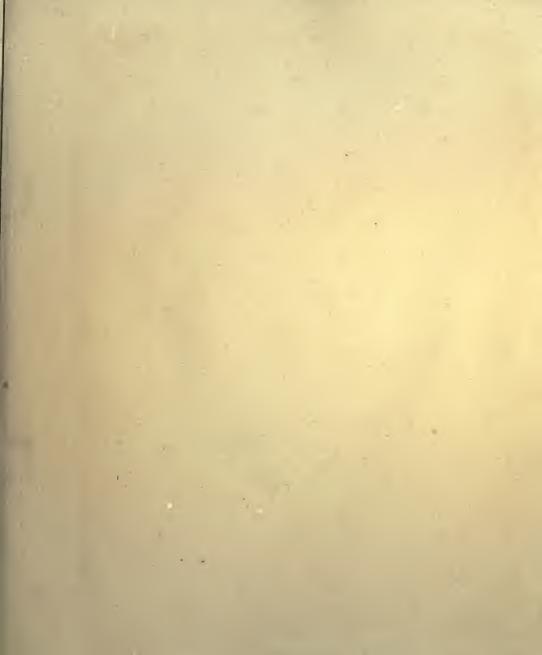


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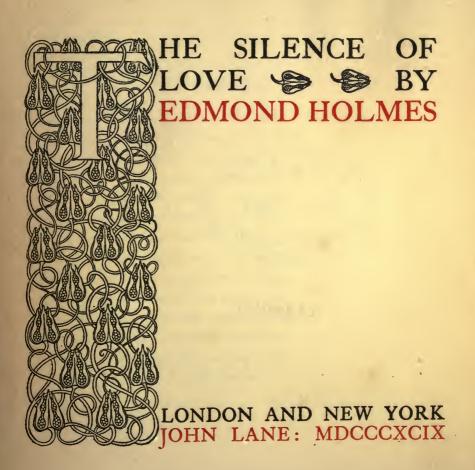


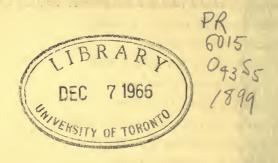
Jane Heur Collis from Edmond Holms Xmas 1890



THE SILENCE OF LOVE.







1148022

TO OXFORD.

"Queen of romance!" whose charm hath witched away
The numbing spell that held my life in thrall,
Is it not meet that on this vernal day
These wafted blossoms at thy feet should fall?
Absence from thee was winter to my heart:
Leafless I stood 'neath leaden, frosty skies:
Bleak were the winds that blew my boughs apart:
And still the sap delayed and could not rise.
But thy dear presence is perennial spring:
And, to thy side restored, from every root
I feel the rising life-stream throb and sting
And tingle into leaf and flower and fruit.
So, since thy love begot them, do not scorn
To wear these tokens of a life re-born.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard, The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky, Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard; Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.

R. BROWNING, Abt Vogler.

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L.

TO PSYCHE.

- 27

HEN first the light of thy beloved eyes
Shone on my soul, its hidden fire awoke,—
A fire which smoulders low but never dies—
And brightly glowing from its embers broke:

First love, then hope, then yearnings strange and deep;
Then, as to each the silent message came,
New thoughts, new aims, new powers arose from sleep,
Till all the mystic circle was aflame.
So in the springtime, when the south wind blows,
Warm with the sunshine of far tropic climes,
Kissing earth's slumb'rous eyelids as he goes,
Breathing of larger life and happier times,—
The drear dark land, a hundred leagues along,
Breaks into bud and leaf and light and song.

AS it my fault that, when the south-wind blew, The dreaming earth burst into leaf and flower? That in thy presence life awoke anew,—A larger life rekindled by love's power?

Was it my fault that from its cloudless height
Thy golden sunshine streamed into my soul?
Was it my fault that in thy starlike light
My spirit saw its beacon and its goal?
Is it my fault that beauty draws the heart
As the moon draws the ocean to her will;
Or as the minstrel with a master's art
Draws from each harp-string a responsive thrill?
Is it my fault that love directs my way,
Love, Lord of Fate, but vassal to thy sway?

Pure as the dawn, calm as the starlit night,
Sweet as the flowers that April breezes bring,
Strong as the sea, swift as the lightning's flight?
Is it thy fault that through thy silent eyes
An angel's soul speaks to the souls of men
Of lands of light beyond their bending skies,
Of mystic worlds beyond their mortal ken?
Is it thy fault that beauty, charm and grace
Flow from thy form like fragrance from a flower?
Is it thy fault that from thy radiant face
The light of love falls in a golden shower?
Is it thy fault that feature, form and mien,
Motion and voice proclaim thee love's own queen?

MAY not love thee." "May not!" but I do:
This is my title to the crown of love,—
A title which each heart-beat doth renew,—
A title ancient as the stars above.
"I may not love thee." "May not!" but I must:
When Nature's mightiest forces are at play,
The ship, o'ermastered by the whirling gust,
Forgets its course and wanders far astray.
"I may not love thee." "May not!" but I will:
My soul loves thine and glories in love's name,—
Itself its arbiter of good and ill,—
Itself the well-spring of its ardent flame.
I may not love thee, my Beloved! but still

Love thee I do, I must, I ever will.

MAY not love thee, for a flaming sword
Sunders our lives and blinds my wistful eyes;
And evermore an angel of the Lord
Stands at the gate that guards my paradise.
I may not love thee, for the high decree
That tells my doom disarms my heart's revolt:
My chains are riveted to set me free;
And love divine draws every bar and bolt.
My passions plead that Nature's passionate force
Inflames their fire and makes their patience pain:
But nearer still to Nature's inmost source,
And mightier far, the forces that restrain.
Let others grope; my path is clear as day:
Let others doubt; I doubt not but obey.

MAY not love thee;—yet perchance I may:
Love, as the world knows love, may ne'er be mine,—
Insurgent love, whose gold is three parts clay,
Wild love, forgetful of its source divine:—
Not this! Not this! I know its certain doom,
The sure extinction of its lurid light,
The chilling mists, the storm-cloud's gathering gloom,
The dusk of twilight and the depths of night.
Not this! Not this! But what if love should spring
Straight from the soul and leave the earth behind,
Ethereal, pure, exultant, strong of wing,
Vivid as lightning, chainless as the wind:—
What law, what fate's decree, what sword of flame
Could turn so pure a passion from its aim?

VII:

HEN from the body death has loosed the soul,
Up through the realms of space it takes its flight,
Flashes at will from utmost pole to pole,
Fathoms the void abysses of the night:—

Anon, revisiting our earth, it finds
Our hard realities are things of nought;
And through them, seeking our imprisoned minds,
Passes at pleasure, like a thrill of thought.
E'en so the death of earth-born base desire
Gives wings of freedom to my fettered love,
Freedom to hope, to worship, to aspire,
To pierce its prison walls, to soar above:
To pass, through every hindrance, every bar,
Straight to thy beacon-light, my shining star!

VIII.

ATURE hath crowned thee with her fairest crown:
Men call thee beautiful in form and face,
Praise thy dark eyes, thy tresses golden-brown,
Thy stately height, thy figure's buoyant grace.

I see these charms, but with another sight,
As symbols of a charm still unexpressed;
See in their loveliness thy spirit's light
Burning through clouds,—half-hidden, half-confessed.
Should I have loved thee hadst thou been less fair?
Vain question! for thy beauty is thine own—
Thine own—thy self: 'tis because thou art there,
That all thy grace to fuller grace has grown.
Thy spirit made thee beautiful, and still
It moulds thy form and features to its will.

IX.

HEN with closed eyes I strive to paint thy face,
And think its image will obey my will,
An aureole of more than mortal grace
Veils it from sight and baffles all my skill.

When, in the ardour of untamed desire,
Wild thoughts and fancies break from my control,
They shrink abashed back from that shield of fire,
The pure effulgence of thy starlike soul.
'Twas ever so: my passion in its birth
Learned this one lesson of its stormy stress,—
That it must purge itself from taint of earth,
Or perish strangled by its own excess:
So in the white heat of thy spirit's flame
It burned away its baseness and its shame.

HE mists rise upward from the Ocean's breast,
And high in æther vanish from the view,
Till by the chilling winds embraced, caressed,
They change to clouds and drift across the blue:—

Drift far away, drift landward, till at last,
Leaving behind them the unmeasured main,
O'er hill and valley borne by breeze or blast,
They weep themselves to earth in showers of rain:
Thence swept along by dancing beck or burn
Into the river's ever widening course,
Back to the depths of ocean they return,
And stay their wanderings in their primal source.
So flows eternally from birth to grave,
From death to life, love's world-embracing wave.

XI.

ROM many a fount on distant moor or fell
The sacred waters to the vale descend,
Through trackless gorge or dark secluded dell,
Till in one ampler stream they meet and blend.

At first impetuous, with headlong course,
From rock to rock the river rends its way:
Then by degrees its passions lose their force,
And ripples glance where foam-bells used to play.
So gliding onward, deep and calm and wide,
A sea-like river journeying to the sea,
It meets the silent influx of the tide,
Crosses the bar and wanders blest and free;
Free with the freedom of the boundless deep;
Blest with the blessing of its moonlit sleep.

XII.

HAT if a storm in some lone mountain height, Scaling the blue with black rebellious flag, Darkening the day with gleams of vivid light, Rolling its thunder round from crag to crag;—

If such a storm, so swift and strong, should come And pour its pent-up passion far below, Making deep music where the stream was dumb, Quickening to life the current's languid flow,— Till the great river winding through the plains Woke from the spell of its enchanted sleep, Felt the fierce impulse of the mountain rains, And rolled its floods far out into the deep;— If such a storm should gather, who could say To mystic Nature's mightiest forces "Nay"?

XIII.

ELL may the river bless the surging flood,
That speeds it onward to its ocean grave;
Well may the heart rejoice whose torpid blood
Thrills to the impulse of love's rushing wave.

Swift let the waters flow from source to sea;
But let their time-worn channel guide them still.
Ill fares the stream, impatient to be free,
That breaks its bonds with wild rebellious will.
For this the doom of passion's impious haste,
Of lawless love that cannot brook delay,—
To find in stagnant pool or marshy waste
Not death's deliverance but death's decay;—
Lost beyond hope, lost to the sea's embrace,
Traitor to love, and exile from love's face.

XIV.

OMETIMES in dreams I clasp thy breast to mine, And kiss thy lips and with thy tresses play, And through the floodgates of some outward sign Pour all the passion of my heart away.

Sometimes in dreams I tell my secret so;
Then wake to find that it is still untold,—
That still the surging, storm-fed waters flow,
By Fate's relentless ramparts still controlled.
O better thus,—better that passion's force,
Which love's impatient raptures had set free,
Pent in the prison of its channelled course,
Should give the river strength to reach the sea.
Better, for passion's sake, that passion's dream
Should fade forgotten with the morn's first gleam.

XV.

Y love must love be mastered, fire by fire,
Passion by passion. When the heart grows warm,
Its flame must quench the flame of its desire,
Its new-found strength must quell its gathering storm.

Not law, not duty, not the warning voice
Of saint or angel keeps love's compass true:
Reckless of Fate love makes its fateful choice:
To love alone is love's allegiance due.
Love's power alone can make love's passion pure:
Love's voice alone can bid love's tumult cease:
Love's pain alone can make love's bliss endure:
Love's fire alone brings to love's fever peace.
O love! inflame my heart, and set it free
From every wild unhallowed dream of thee.

XVI.

DO not think my heart is numb and cold,
Because its days of fierce desire are dead:
O do not think my spirit has grown old
Because the storm and stress of youth are sped.

O do not think love's current is asleep,
Because it glides in silence through life's plain:
Is it not rolling seaward, wide and deep,
Rich with the tribute of a kingdom's rain?
O 'tis the depth of love that makes it still,—
The strength of love that gives it self-control:
Leave foam and fury to the mountain rill!
Dumb are the deepest passions of the soul.
Love's silence tells the largeness of its life;
Its calm the tension of its inward strife

XVII.

RIENDS" we must call ourselves,—a sacred name, Yet all too cold to match my heart's desire; "Friends," lest the world should misconceive my aim, And take love's starlight for a baser fire.

"Friends" we must call ourselves; and when we meet,
Fronting each other with unruffled brow,
With calm polite composure we must greet,
Lightly touch hands, or from a distance bow.
I sometimes wonder, when we so rehearse
The parts assigned us in life's tragic play,
When freely, carelessly our lips converse,
As o'er life's surface with light laugh we stray,—
I sometimes wonder does thy heart divine
What thoughts, what passions surge and seethe in mine?

XVIII.

OVE! dost thou love me?" Oft the words have sprung Straight from my heart and flashed upon my will:

Oft on my lips the fatal words have hung,

Then trembled into silence, deep and still.

O had they ever trembled into speech,
What woe, what desolation had they wrought!
How swiftly had they swept beyond my reach
All that the travail of my soul has sought!
For either No had dammed my passion back,
Or Yes had brought it down in sudden flood:—
A fatal choice! Here ruin and there rack;
Ice in the heart or fever in the blood.
No! let me lock my secret in my breast
And keep my love, for love's sake, unconfessed.

XIX.

HE hours are minutes when we sit alone
Thinking aloud together. First we stray
With careless thought, with careless look and tone,
O'er trivial topics of the passing day.

Then we begin to sound the depths below,—
Our theme our best-loved poets, men whose speech
Measures our thoughts and passions, men who know
What in our heart of hearts we strive to reach.
Then life's great problems draw us downward fast,—
Problems of love and duty, hope and faith;
Until through these our plummet sinks at last
Into the depths of dark unfathomed death.
But deep below the deepest depths we prove
Lie the great deeps of my unuttered love.

XX.

SOMETIMES wish that all the song and light
That thrills or flashes through the realms of space,
That all the loveliness of day and night,
The strength, the majesty, the charm, the grace;
I sometimes wish that every wondrous gleam
That lifts the darkness of our mortal life,
The prophet's ecstasy, the poet's dream,
The saint's desire, the hero's inward strife;
I wish that from the future and the past,
From heaven and earth, from every sphere and clime,
My soul might draw these in and hold them fast,
And be them all for one brief pulse of time.
Then might I speak what ear has never heard,
And tell my passion in one sovereign word.

XXI.

OULD words unfold the secrets of my heart,
Throw searching light on every dark recess,
Divine its deepest thoughts with magic art,
Thoughts that it dares not to itself confess;—
Could words reveal my passion, tell its range,
Fathom its depths, map out its winding course,
Track it from mood to mood, from change to change,
Forecast its future, show its hidden source;—
Could words unseal the fountain of desire,
Say what I wish for, hope for, follow, seek;—
Could words flash forth like lightning, burn like fire:—
I, who am silent now, might haply speak.
Vain dream! the only voices of the soul
Are silence, self-effacement, self-control.

XXII.

ASKED the wind to tell my heart's unrest:

With frenzied blast the fierce autumnal gale
Rushed landward from its cloud-world in the west,—
Then died away with faint despairing wail.

I asked the sea: its billows shook the shore
With deafening boom,—then rocked themselves to sleep.
I asked the thunder; but its crashing roar
Became at last a stillness dread and deep.
Faint voices all! My love was still untold:
No storm could measure its tempestuous might:
Then in the heights above I saw unrolled
The calm majestic pageant of the night;
And in its silence caught the only strain
That tells aright love's passion and love's pain.

XXIII.

S it not well that love should seal my lips?

That all their mused words should swoon and die?

What could confession bring me? Love's eclipse;—

The inward light veiled from the inward eye.

Is it not well that when the tide-waves roll
In from the deeps of love's mysterious main,
Their rising flood of silence should control
The heart's tumultuous ecstasy and pain?
O let us talk of all things—new and old,
Trivial and grave—till we can talk no more:
But let me keep one thought untouched, untold;
And do thou guess that I have locked one door.
So, when the spaces of charmed silence come,
My heart's deep love will be no longer dumb.

XXIV.

HEN spring-time comes, the happy pairing birds
Trill forth their loves and flood the air with song;
But when we fling love's passion into words,
Not joy but sorrow makes our music strong:

Not joy but sorrow makes our music strong:

Not joy but sorrow makes our music sweet:—
Yet are we happier than the birds that pair?
For silence gives our joy a safe retreat,
While theirs is poured into the depths of air.
They sing away their gladness, we our pain:
They sing away their longings, we our fears:
They sing themselves to sleep: our last low strain
Falls fraught with rhythmic silence on our ears.
Words are the mists that bear love's tears away;—
Silence the herald of its dawning day.

XXV.

The just requital of its toil and strife?

I sometimes doubt if aught but love's return

Can feed the fountain of love's inmost life:

I sometimes think the torch is burning low

That does not kindle quick responsive fire:

I sometimes think the heart is beating slow

That asks not quick fulfilment of desire.

Vain doubts! Vain questions! When the queen of night

Summons the seas to follow in her train,

In silent answer to her silent might

Sweeps round the world the tide-wave of the main:

So when its summons comes, love does not wait

For doubt or question, but obeys its fate.

XXVI.

HAT do I seek! What do I strive to gain?
What purpose strengthens me to play my part?
What dream of happiness outweighs my pain?
What hope brings consolation to my heart?

It is the hope to see thy radiant eyes
Make sweet confession in a gleam of light?—
To learn of thee that I have won life's prize,
Won to my will thy spirit pure and bright?
Perish the thought! I give, I do not lend:
No sordid, no usurious love is mine:
My recompense for spending is to spend:
Love lent is mortal, lavished is divine.
Not by its intake is love's fount supplied,
But by the ceaseless outrush of its tide.

XXVII.

Y love is deeper than the midmost sea,
And swifter than the storm-fed mountain flood,
And stronger than the billows rolling free
Before the wild south-wester's flying scud.

So deep, so swift, so strong it rushes forth, Flinging its waves of passion far and wide, Like some cloud-cradled river of the North That sweeps to sea with dark tumultuous tide. Yet all too shallow, all too slow, too weak, Love's outrush seems to my impatient breast, Which longs to pour itself away, to wreak On one wild word the whole of love's unrest. But ah! the more I lavish love, the more My springs of love renew their hidden store.

XXVIII.

ASK not for possession of thy heart:
Thou art no chattel to be bought and sold,—
No precious plaything wrought with curious art,
For all to covet and for one to hold.

I ask not if the magnet of desire
Will draw at last thy spirit near to mine:
Not this my dream, but ever soaring higher
To merge at last my spirit's life in thine.
I ask no boon, no guerdon save the right
To give my love, my life, my self to thee,—
Bound to thy soul with chains of golden light,
Blest in my bondage, freer than the free.
I ask for freedom to obey love's call;
I ask for nothing, yet I ask for all.

XXIX.

O master Destiny by force of will,—
This is the steadfast purpose of my life:—
To wrest success from failure, good from ill,
Gladness from desolation, peace from strife;
To pierce like spring through winter's shroud of white;
To harden hope with stern despair's alloy;
To see God's lamps resplendent in the night;
To build up happiness from ruined joy:—
This is my purpose. In so dire a fray
He cannot lose whose loss is tenfold gain.
Summoned by love, to love I'll win my way,
Through failure, disappointment, sorrow, pain.
For Fate, whose fetters bind the Gods above,
Bows to the lordship of the star of love.

XXX.

Part at love's bidding, part lest love should die?
And when my doom confronts me, will my heart
Have strength to say that bitter last good-bye?
Shall I not now, while yet the years conceal
The tragic outcome of love's tangled play,—
Shall I not now, while yet my wounds might heal,
Forestall the anguish of that fatal day?
No! let me face it all, and live it through,
Reckless of joy or sorrow, good or ill.
Pain is my pride when love demands its due.
I fear no fate but treason to love's will.
Nay, if God please, my heart will gladly break
In love's dear service and for thy dear sake.

XXXI.

EN ask what is the issue of my quest?
What profit have I of my patient love?
Is not a woman's tender throbbing breast
Nearer to Heaven than all the heights above?

I ask in answer "Has he won life's prize
For whom success is failure, gain is loss,
Who strangles love and wonders that it dies,
Whose bliss is "very woe," whose gold is dross?
Is it a gain to barter joy for shame,
Hope for remorse, desire for sated lust,
To prove that love is but an empty name,
To grasp at happiness and find it dust?
To learn too late that unfulfilled desire
Is the true fuel of love's sacred fire?"

XXXII.

AD no stern mandate held our lives apart— No voice of doom foreboding grief and shame; Had all the fervent passion of my heart Waked in thy heart a like contagious flame;

Had life run smoothly; had the Fates fulfilled My every hope, my every dream and prayer; Had all that ardent love has ever willed Been showered upon me without stint or care;—Could but one silent wish have brought me this, Would I have breathed it? O my soul rejoice;—To balance love against a lover's bliss—God of His mercy spared thee this dread choice. Does not love die—O dark and awful thought!—Die of achieving all that it has sought?

XXXIII.

Cor caught the music of thy pulsing wings?
What heart hath felt the thrill of thy embrace,
The throb of rapture which thy message brings?
Is it in vain that through the rolling years
From dream to dream thy beauty lures us on?
That mocking echoes haunt our listening ears?
That when we think to clasp thee, thou art gone?
Or can it be that what is last is first;
The goal the source; life's aim life's fountain head;
Thyself the dream, the hope, the burning thirst,
The gloom that gathers when thy light hath fled?
O then we find thee when our search is vain,
And feel thy kisses in our throes of pain.

XXXIV.

HAT purpose rules the courses of the stars?
What strength sustains us when we draw life's breath?
What wonders lie beyond our prison bars?
What visage hides behind the mask of death?

We think and think, but cannot find the clue:
We strain our eyes, but cannot pierce the veil:
From guess to guess life's meaning we pursue
Till thoughts' untiring pinions droop and fail.
Then from the dawn of love there comes a gleam
Of golden hope, a rose-flush of desire:
And lo! the soul, awakened from life's dream,
Reads the world's riddle in that streak of fire;
Reads it while yet love's orb delays to rise;
Reads it while yet love's advent lights the skies.

XXXV.

HEN in the east the flowing tide of day
O'erwhelms the darkness with its flood of light,
My fears, my doubts, my sorrows melt away
With the last shadows of the dying night.

When in the flush of morn a sudden glow
Tells where the sun's bright banner is unfurled,
Watching the wonder of the dawn, I know
At last—at last—the secret of the world!
O mystic splendour all too soon withdrawn:
The sun ascends—the charm, the spell departs:
O well, thrice well, that love's eternal dawn
Still fires with hope our still expectant hearts:—
Well that its orb ne'er climbs the rim of earth:—
Well that its life is all a glorious birth.

XXXVI.

F love must die of gaining what it seeks,

Then must love seek what it may never gain;

Then must love soar beyond our "hours and weeks,"

Beyond our suns that set, our moons that wane;

Beyond our dreams of possible delight;

Beyond our dreams or possible delight;
Beyond bewitching beauty's fatal spell;
Beyond imagination's eagle flight;
Beyond the tolling of death's solemn bell;
Beyond all these, beyond all time and space,
Till round the Universe it wings its way,
And circling back to thy beloved face
Sees in thine eyes the dawn of a new day,
Sees in the outpoured radiance of thy soul
The far-flashed light of its eternal goal.

XXXVII.

EN ask what is the issue of my quest?

I answer "This—that issue there is none:

The energy of love may never rest:

Its life were over if its work were done.

Love were not love if it could win its prize:
Love were not love if it could reach its goal:
Love were not love if in the loved one's eyes
It could not find unfathomed depths of soul.
Love is enough: I love, nor ask for more:
Love is its own reward, its own delight:
Love is the atmosphere through which I soar:
Love's are the wings on which I take my flight.
Love—silent, unrequited, unconfessed,—
This is my pride; in this my life is blest."

XXXVIII.

F thy dear spirit, gazing into mine,
Could by a flash of insight so lay bare
My inmost thoughts as haply to divine
The secret that I guard with jealous care:
And if deep pity for my desperate love
Should cloud thine eyes with warm compassionate tears;
O do not let them flow, my life! my dove!
But stay thy sorrow and dispel thy fears.
For I who ask for nothing but the right
To love without a hope of love's return,—
I walk through life transfigured by the light
Of the pure flame that in my heart doth burn:—
Blest beyond words,—whose bliss can never cloy,
Whose love itself is faith and hope and joy.

XXXIX.

NCE, as I gazed at thee, methought there came Into thine eyes a gleam of love's own light:
Was it reflected from my passion's flame?
Or was it sunshine from thy heaven's blue height?

I know not and I ask not; but I know
That, as I watched thee with impassioned gaze,
Through all my being streamed the golden glow,
And far beyond me poured its piercing rays;
And in their light all secrets were unsealed,
All problems cancelled and all riddles guessed;
Life's meaning, plan and issue stood revealed,
Its glooms illumined and its wrongs redressed:
Then, as the mists rose up and rolled away,
I saw the dawn of love's triumphant day.

One sign, one look, one touch:—I ask no more,—
No more—no less: a numbing doubt is mine,—
Does Love's great sea break on a phantom shore?
O I am weak that I have asked so much:
My love has dropped to earth from heights of blue:
One sign, one tell-tale look, one lingering touch,—
Feed it with this and it will soar anew.
Give me no answer; let me guess my fate:—
One sign, one look, one touch, one quick-drawn breath:
Not now—not yet: I am content to wait,
Wait through all time, if need be, wait till death;—
Wait through all time for what may never come,—
Wait till at last my beating heart grows dumb.

XLI.

HEN on my brow death's cooling airs blow free,
And all my days except the last are fled;
I have a wish with upturned face to see
Thy gracious form bent o'er my dying head.

I have a wish that on that last of days,
Thy dear, dark eyes, soul-lighted as of old,
Might sound the depths of mine with silent gaze,
And guess the secret that I never told.
I have a wish that on my forehead chill
Thy lips at last might print one pitying kiss,
One kiss of love, whose sweet mysterious thrill
Would seem a foretasteof immortal bliss;
While in thy murmured words my soul might hear
Echoes of angels' voices rolling near.

XLII.

OMETIMES I long to send my soul afar;
To widen self beyond self's utmost bound;
To pass at will beyond the furthest star;
To draw within me all that lies around.

Sometimes I long to make all life my own;
To feel the whole world throbbing in my breast;
To voice Eternity's deep undertone;
To be the very pulse of God's unrest.
Strange yearning dreams—half-rapture and half-pain!
Titanic birth-throes of a life unborn!
Still caged in self I beat my wings in vain:
No breath of freedom comes, no gleam of morn;
Till O Belovèd! in my love of thee
I learn that love at last will set me free.

XLIII.

TRONGER than life is death, for all things die.

Stronger than death is life, for death is nought.

Life,—what is life? A flash that streaks the sky.

Death,—what is death? A name, a haunting thought.

Stronger than life is death, for death subdues
Life's flaring torchlight with its argent rays.
Stronger than death is life, for life renews
Through death the firesprings of its vanished days.
Stronger than life is love, for love's warm breath
Kindles and keeps aglow life's myriad fires.
Stronger than death is love, for love through death
Kindles a larger life when life expires.
Life,—what is life? Love's foreglow in the skies.
Death,—what is death? Love dawning on our eyes.

XLIV.

OT in the strength of duty but of love,
Not as Fate wills but as their comrades call,
The stars of midnight on their orbits move,
Each drawn to each, and all afire for all.
Blind that we are, we think they blindly sweep
Through voids of darkness, without guide or aim:
Yet all the Universe, from deep to deep,
Flashes and glows with love's ethereal flame.
Deaf that we are, we think that silence reigns
When midnight sends no message to our ears:
Yet all Creation echoes to the strains
Sung, at love's bidding, by the gliding spheres.
Silent and dark we deem it,—yet the night
Rings with love's music, quivers with love's light.

XLV.

HAT has life taught me? Will the Judge-Most High, When dawns His splendour on death's deepest gloom, Ask me this question, and with searching eye Read in my heart my answer and my doom?

O when I stand before God's judgement seat,
Before His throne of glory and of grace,
With what confession shall I dare to meet
The sad, the stern reproaches of His face?
What did I learn? My passions to control,
To conquer self, to quench the fire of lust,
To seek Thy will, to purify my soul?—
Not these alas! but O Thou Judge Most Just!
Thou God of love! I learned Thy mystic lore;—
I learned to love, once and for evermore.

XLVI.

CANNING the future with prophetic sight
I see my love soar up beyond the years,
Till on some golden pinnacle of light
With folded wings it stands—and disappears.

Then half-enraptured, half-distressed I think

- "Will my soul follow where love dares to go?
- "Or will it falter on yon dizzy brink
- "And drop from heights of joy to depths of woe?" But "No," love answers, "Wheresoe'er I fly,
- "Thy soul will follow, for its life is mine:
- "Life of thy life, soul of thy soul am I:
- "My dream, my quest, my triumph-all are thine:
- "My fall had dragged thee down to Hell's abyss:
- "My soaring flight is thy ascent to bliss."

XLVII.

HAD a dream that in the world of death
I wandered all astray through time and space,
Wandered, with mind distraught, with broken breath,
Seeking in vain thy dear remembered face.

At last I told my grief in silent prayer.

A voice made answer "Search thine inmost soul:
"All time; all space; the whole wide world is there:
"Love is of all things centre, source and goal."
I gazed within: like clouds that drift above,

Life's joys and sorrows came and passed away:
Then in the cloudless crystal of my love
I saw thee radiant as the dawn of day;
And on thy head love's crown was shining bright
Whose gems are stars, whose gold is living light.

XLVIII.

That not in vain I waited through the years,
Waited and loved, nor asked for love's return,
Waited—with strangled sighs, with unwept tears.
Much have I suffered: great should be my prize:
By love emboldened, love's reward I'll claim:
Not love flashed back on me from lovelit eyes,—
No, but a purer passion, fiercer flame.
The prize of patience is a patient soul;
The prize of constancy a constant heart;
Self-conquest finds its meed in self-control;
Song is of song the guerdon, art of art.
So, to the victor in love's earthly strife
The power to love will be love's crown of life.

XLIX.

NCE, in the travail of my speechless love,
Once—for one blinding moment and no more—
There came a splendour from the world above,
A wave of glory from some golden shore:—

Once—and the light had vanished ere it came:—
Yet is that timeless moment ever mine:
And in my darkest hour that mystic flame
Burns through my being with a glow divine.
For far beyond the heat of sensual fire,
Beyond despair and fear and doubt and faith,
Beyond hope's flight, beyond the soul's desire,
Beyond the range of world-enfolding death,
Beyond the highest Heaven,—I saw afar
The flashing light of love's eternal star.

ILT thou be mine when death has set us free,
Mine and mine only, mine for evermore?"
Poor earth-born dream of love's eternity!—
Not this the Heaven to which my heart would soar.

'Tis freedom not possession that I crave,—
Freedom to love thee without let or bar,
To find new heights of love beyond the grave,
To pour forth waves of love anew, afar.
'Tis freedom, not possession that I prize,—
Freedom to know thee as indeed thou art,
To see thy spirit with unclouded eyes,
To feel its beauty throbbing through my heart;
And, as its glory grows upon my sight,
To learn that light is love, that love is light.









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The silence of love

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